

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 05GUATEMALA1403, GUATEMALA COUNTERDRUG PERFORMANCE: C-CN5-00289

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#05GUATEMALA1403**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
05GUATEMALA1403	2005-06-02 22:10	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET//NOFORN	Embassy Guatemala

Appears in these articles:

<http://plazapublica.com.gt/content/eeuu-la-reduccion-del-ejercito-modero-la-corrupcion-militar-en-la-lucha-antidroga>?

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 GUATEMALA 001403

SIPDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/02/2030

TAGS: [PINR](#) [SNAR](#) [GT](#)

SUBJECT: GUATEMALA COUNTERDRUG PERFORMANCE: C-CN5-00289

REF: STATE 87299

Classified By: DBWHARTON, DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION. REASON 1.4(C).

¶1. (C) The Berger Government (GOG) is seized with and increasingly alarmed by the growing power of drug traffickers in Guatemala. Guatemala, endemic corruption that GOG leaders acknowledge and are doing their best to combat, prevent the GOG from making meaningful progress in the effort to fight drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime.

(C) A recurring theme in US-Guatemalan relations is expressed by GOG officials as "We want and need to reduce drug trafficking, but cannot do so the associated criminal cases run their full course.

(S) If the GOG does enact needed legal reforms, as we have been advocating, US interests would be well served by increasing our anti-drug assistance and end-game capabilities it must have to mount an effective counternarcotics program.

¶2. Responses to INR's specific questions follow:

¶A. (S) What improvements to Guatemala's counterdrug laws and performance have been made during the past year? Have seizures increased? Any

(C) There has been progress toward better cooperation between the Ministry of Government (responsible for police) and the Public Ministry (responsible for Supreme Court justice to prepare a legal brief arguing that wiretapping is not unconstitutional. The Ambassador has promoted the idea persistently.

(C) With the exception of an increase in opium poppy eradication (due to an increase in opium poppy cultivation), GOG counterdrug results are mixed.

(C) The drop in cocaine seizures is due to lack of resources, changes in trafficking patterns, and corruption in law enforcement organizations. The military and inadequate funding levels (from both the USG and the GOG) has precluded adequate repair, training and fuel for Guatemala aircraft and has taken the Air Force out of action.

Similar shortages of equipment and fuel have precluded effective operations by the Guatemalan Navy. Moreover, traffickers have shifted from domestic and the cost of becoming capable of night ops is prohibitive at current INCLE funding levels. Endemic corruption within the SAIA (specialized

¶B. (S) What has the new administration done to combat corruption within the Government of Guatemala?

(U) The GOG is making substantial efforts against corruption. It is actively prosecuting several high-level corruption cases, has dismissed several

(U) Candidates for entry into SAIA (the specialized anti-drug police) undergo a background investigation, polygraph exam, and urinalysis testing.

(U) The GOG has also moved aggressively against all forms of public corruption. In 2004 the anti-corruption prosecutor (an Embassy-supported foreign prosecutors, the GOG is pursuing two major embezzlement cases in which money was likely moved through US institutions.

(U) The Director General of the police has established a "zero tolerance" policy on corruption. During 2004, more than 2,000 cases were opened and sentenced to 13 years in prison, and another counter-drug prosecutor is currently under investigation for theft of government funds.

¶C. (S) How has the reduction of Guatemalan military forces affected the drug trade in Guatemala?

(C) The reduction in the overall number of soldiers from about 27,000 to about 15,000 has not had a significant effect. The change of Army structure in the Peten region and throughout the Peten. Sadly, there is no evidence that the former military presence in these areas ever deterred drug trafficking payrolls and military corruption. As described above, lack of funding for maintenance, fuel and training of military aircraft and naval vessel

¶D. (S) Is there evidence of narco-corruption in the political system? Are drug monies flowing to political parties?

(S) There is anecdotal evidence of trafficker support to parties, candidates and politicians. Accounts include political candidates being offered

At least one member of Congress has close relations with persons thought to be involved in drug trafficking. These accounts tend to be hearsay and politicians with whom we have regular contact beseech us for support in the fight against drug trafficking and practically beg us to take suspected

(S) Narco-corruption is a greater concern in courts and police forces. A judge's decision in late 2004 to allow bail for one of Guatemala's leading government to identify ways we can provide support for the reform program. The government has made a good effort to prosecute corruption in the PNC and SAIA, and a number of officers have been arrested, tried and convicted, but corruption remains endemic throughout the police. DEA manages a small vetted unit of court

¶E. (S) How are the Guatemalan police effective in countering drug trafficking? In what areas are they lacking? Do they have adequate resources?

(C) The Guatemalan police are not effective against drug trafficking. They lack integrity, training, motivation, equipment, transportation and the Embassy has organized a mission. There are enough SAIA agents (about 300) to have some effect, but without the resources mentioned above, they

(C) PNC and SAIA forces need an effective internal investigative capability in order to detect corrupt officers via financial and lifestyle investigations.

function remains under-resourced and investigator case-loads are too heavy to allow real effectiveness.

¶F. (S) What evidence is there of police or military collusion with drug traffickers, such as helping in off-loading drugs or providing security?

(C) We doubt that police or military collusion includes direct, physical involvement in drug trafficking. The most compelling evidence of police

¶G. (S) What is the division of labor between the police and the military in the drug arena? What is the level of cooperation?

(U) For ground operations, the military only provide support) transportation, communication, and perimeter security. In these operations the military have no powers of arrest or investigation and its intelligence service is greatly degraded. In maritime operations, the Guatemalan Navy has vested authority to stop and detain

If suspects are detained or contraband seized, arrangements are made for pier-side transfer to civilian authorities upon return to port. The fierce competition for limited resources.

¶H. (S) Does Guatemala cooperate with other countries on counternarcotics issues?

(C) Yes, but mostly on an ad-hoc basis, primarily involving informal agreements to permit hot pursuit of traffickers along national frontiers

¶I. (S) Who are the major drugs traffickers in Guatemala? What are their nationalities? How large are their organizations?

(C) The five largest trafficking organizations in Guatemala are known by the family names of their leaders. They are:

- Leon
- Lorenzana
- Mendoza
- Zarceno
- Paredes

The leaders of each of these organizations are Guatemalan. We do not have hard information about the size of the organizations, but believe the

¶J. (S) What role do Colombian and Mexican cocaine traffickers play in Guatemala's drug trade? At what point do Mexican and Colombian traffickers establish ownership over cocaine? How often do they finance cocaine loads up front? How do they pay for the services of Peruvian and Bolivian drug groups?

(C) Mexican and Colombian traffickers are much larger and more powerful than Guatemalan drug trafficking organizations. Guatemalans are at a disadvantage. Guatemalans often play an important role in the drug business by acting as escrow accounts for drugs transferred from Colombian suppliers to

(C) Ownership of cocaine is determined early in the trafficking process, usually in one of the two following ways:
Scenario A: Colombian traffickers ship their own product north by using a Guatemalan-based drug transporting organization. In this scheme, the Colombian cocaine is shipped north to the US. The scheme involves many alliances and requires considerable trust among the owner of the cocaine and those who are contracted to transport it. The farther north a Colombian can land his cargo (by air or sea), the fewer people he must pay for transportation and protective anti-drug operations, however, Colombian traffickers have shifted their landing points south into Guatemala. From Guatemala, single large ships

(C) Scenario B: Guatemalan traffickers purchase cocaine from Colombian suppliers and ship their Guatemalan cocaine north to the US. On occasion

(C) Scenario C: We are also seeing Colombian groups moving into Guatemala to set up shop. With increased pressure in their home country, some Colombian organizations have found it easier to conduct business

¶K. (S) How do drug groups in Guatemala launder their funds? Where do they keep or invest their illicit income?

(U) In the last 2 years the Guatemalan banking system has become much better at policing itself (Guatemala was removed from the FATF black list)

(C) Guatemalan traffickers use 2 methods of dealing with US Dollar proceeds:

A - They smuggle bulk quantities of dollars to Guatemala and use illegal exchange houses to convert the money into Quetzals. With the Quetzals, they buy land, real estate, and durable goods in Guatemala.

B) They use the Black Market Peso Exchange (BMPE) to convert Dollars to Colombian Pesos. In this scenario the Guatemalan trafficker gives the

¶L. (S) What is the role of gangs in the drug trade in Guatemala? What, if any, evidence is there of gangs cooperating with drug trafficking groups?

(C) Gangs in Guatemala serve as the low-level distributors of illegal drugs to the local population and serve as outlets for the sale of cocaine seeking to maintain relatively low profiles. For the same reason, gang members are not useful as body-smugglers.

HAMILTON